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FM AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9231
INFO RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA IMMEDIATE 0207
RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L PRAGUE 000707

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/13/2017
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SUBJECT: CZECHS ON UNHRC REFORM FIFTH SESSION PACKAGE

REF: A. STATE 80095

[1](#)B. GARBER/DODMAN E-MAIL 14 JUNE 2007

Classified By: Acting Deputy Chief of Mission Michael Dodman
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) The Czechs are strongly in favor of maintaining the UNHRC country mandates for all countries, including Cuba and Belarus, but have not yet determined how they will vote. In discussions on June 14 with Czech MFA Human Rights Director Veronika Stromsikova and June 15 with MFA Political Director Martin Povejsil (to deliver ref B points), Czech officials made clear to A/DCM that Foreign Minister Schwarzenberg is personally committed to maintaining the Cuba and Belarus mandates (in addition to those for Burma and North Korea). However, according to Stromsikova, the Czechs face two dilemmas: they also want to see this session approve a strong code of conduct for special procedures that may be carried out in the future, and expect that the only way the Council will agree to approve a code of conduct with any teeth is in return for eliminating some of the existing country-specific mandates. Second, the Czechs are under strong pressure from their EU colleagues, and particularly the German presidency, to maintain unity. Stromsikova noted that while the Dutch are also considering voting against a final package that drops the two mandates, she is not optimistic that they will in the end break consensus. She understands that the British also disagree with these decisions, but if necessary will express their concern in a strong explanation of vote (and that this is a step the Czechs also plan, if they do not have the chance to cast a vote).

[1](#)2. (C) Stromsikova said the Czechs are waiting to see the final text of the Council package before determining what they will do next week. Based on the final text, which they expect to see over the weekend, Stromsikova and Povejsil will consult with FM Schwarzenberg on the specific step the Czechs should take during a vote. Beyond reiterating that Schwarzenberg has instructed that the Czechs should work to maintain all four mandates, Povejsil could not speculate whether or not the Czechs would force a vote on the package. Stromsikova said that, because of the pressure from EU partners, it would be simpler for the Czechs if another country called for the vote. In this case, she was confident the Czechs would vote against a package deal. Likewise, Stromsikova held out some hope that the Council President would agree to open the individual items under discussion to votes. Even under this scenario she expected that the Cuba mandate would not survive, but thought Belarus would. The Czechs have already alerted the German Presidency to the fact that they may break ranks, and Stromsikova understood that the Germans were going to approach the HRC Chair to seek such a mechanism, but she was not optimistic of success.

[1](#)3. (C) Likewise, Stromsikova was gloomy on prospects for

avoiding a permanent Israeli-specific agenda item, given that the stance of the majority of UNHRC members. However, in this case at least the EU is unified in opposing this step.

14. (C) A/DCM pressed for Czech leadership and asked for an explanation of why, given the Foreign Minister's strong views on this, the government was not yet committed to making sure there was a vote. Stomsikova noted the importance of the code of conduct measures passing, but also concern that this step could limit Czech effectiveness in the future, including during the 2009 Czech EU Presidency when it hopes to be an HRC member and wants to be effective in shaping the Council's work. She promised to alert the embassy once the Minister had determined the final instructions for the Czech delegation in Geneva.

GRABER